Progress of the Negro – 1937

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Woman's Realm

"Negro's Struggle Upward" Studied At Lutheran Missionary Meeting

"The Negro's Struggle Upward" was the subject for study at the meeting of the Woman's Missionary Society of Augsburg Lutheran Church today at the home of Mrs. G. R Kirkman with Mrs Martha Misenheimer as associate hostess.

Mrs. Roy Setzer was the leader of the study and, prior to the discussion Mrs. J. H. Swaim sang spiritual responses to the Scripture lesson. Prayer was repeated in unison.

The discussion was divided into several topics: "The Struggle to Get an Education," "The Spread of Christianity Among Negroes," "Increasing Life's Span," "The Bitter Struggle for Bread" and "At the Bar of Justice." Those taking part in the presentation of this interesting subject were: Mesdames S. H. Julian, S. W. Hahn, Mary S. Efird, J. P. Brown and R. W. Sills.

Pertinent and interesting facts were brought out by these ladies. In introduction, Paul Lawrence Dunbar was quoted: "Slow moves the pageant of a climbing race." The progress of the Negro over the long and perilous climb was traced. Stage by stage, from tribal Africa to commercial bondage on slave ships; to feudal serfdom in a strange country; and then to sudden emancipation and citizenship in a republic which has continued to consider him and treat him as an alien. the Negro has been thrust onward by forces he did not originate and over which he had no control.

The struggle to get an education, the early efforts of mistresses of slaves, illicit efforts at education and finally the modern steps in education were graphically presented. The spread of Christianity among the Negroes was spoken of, and here again the efforts of the mistresses of the early slaves was of importance as were the efforts of the Quakers, always enemies of slavery. Statistics concerning the Negro churches of today were cited.

One of the most interesting phases of the study was that of the matter of Negro health and life span. Decided gains have been made during recent years, but much is still to be desired. Infant mortality continues high, running from 100 to 200 per thousand births in different cities and averaging about twice the rate for white children. The maternal death rate averages 67 per cent. higher than that for white mothers. Inadequate hospital facilities were discussed, and it was stated that, although the larger Southern cities are endeavoring to provide reasonably for Negro hospitalization, in the smaller towns and rural sections, hospital facilities for either race are usually meager or wholly lacking.

"The real reason for slavery was economic," said Mrs. Brown in discussion the "Bitter Struggle for Bread." For 100 years, black labor has furnished the background for our agriculture in the South. Today there are still four-fifths of the Negroes in the South and most of these live on the soil. While Negroes have been making gains in education and in health, the same cannot be said of the economic status.

"The political situation concerning the Negro seems to be improving," stated Mrs. R. W. Sills, in presentation of her topic "At the Bar of Justice." "Though the administration of justice is not yet color blind, the Negro's standing in our courts is improving. However, there still remains much to be done in the way of simple freedom, and justice for the Negro in our boasted land of liberty. We practice segregation, discrimination and persecution. Racial prejudice constantly pushes back the Negro in his hard-fought struggle to win real freedom. Is it not time that the Christian forces in America act as the good neighbor?"

After the study, Mrs. J. P. Brown presided over the business session. During the social hour, the hostesses served delightful refreshments.

PAGEANT TO DEPICT PROGRESS OF NEGRO

Life Of Last 66 Years Will Be Dramatized Here

A pageant depicting the progress of the Negro race in Birmingham during the last 66 years will feature a three-day good-will program here Sept. 8-10.

The program, sponsored by The Weekly Review, Birmingham Negro newspaper, also will include addresses by Dr. George W. Carver of Tuskegee Institute, who will discuss his scientific research activities; Mary McLeod Bethune, of the National Youth Administration, and Laurence Jones, professor at Piney Woods College, Piney Woods, Miss.

An exhibit will be shown at the Negro Masonic Temple throughout the program. The pageant, written by Robert Jones of Industrial High School, will be presented by 66 Negro girls on the night of Sept. 10.

Tulsa, Set Back By 1921 Race Riot, Is Unique City

By C. E. CHAPMAN

TULSA, Nov. 5—The Race district of Tulsa, both business and residential, takes an undisputed place among American cities as the most unique as relates to our business and the comeback generally in the face of disastrous and seeming unsurmountable disadvantages.

Simon Berry

Here, as is found nowhere else in the nation, it is that from the barrenness which followed in the wake of the disastrous Tulsa riot of June 1, 1921, that one sees today a contrast that is incredible.

From the disastrous consequences attendant upon the riot, disastrous both in property values and in manhood and spirit, the far-famed Greenwood district has evolved a variety of business enterprises, second to none from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The same statement holds true for the comback of our residential district, the center of which is Lansing street.

Only those acquainted with the situation which immediately followed the 1921 riot can fully appreciate the present status of the Race in Tulsa as regards business enterprises and his home life situation.

Phenomenal Progress

That there has been phenomenal progress, may be indicated by the following statistics about the Race in Tulsa: there are two first class bakeries; 12 barbershops; 9 beauty shops; 10 cleaning and tailoring shops; 21 cafe and chili parlors; four dentists; two exclusive dressmaking establishments; seven drug stores; seven doctors; one electric company; two florists; three furniture repair establishments; two undertaking establishments; nine garages and auto repair shops; 26 groceries and markets—the largest of which is the Mann brothers, where 12 people are regularly employed; four hotels —one of which is the Hotel Small, said to be one of the finest in the southwest which has 75 rooms with hot and cold water and every modern convenience;

Two insurance companies; one jewelry store; two newspapers; one plumbing company; seven recreational parlors; two real estate dealers; two photographic studios; six shoe and repair shops; two taxicab companies; one Y. M. C. A.; one Y. W. C. A.; six lawyers; one municipal hospital; one municipal swimming pool; one accredited high school with an enrollment of 570; one accredited junior high school with an enrollment of 900; two elementary schools with an enrollment exceeding 1,800; there are 101 teachers in these schools, with a single scale salary schedule; that is, teachers of both races receive the same scale salary; many churches; many first class rooming houses; one deputy sheriff; nine policemen; two plainclothes detectives; one scout car, manned by two Race officers; and numerous other enterprises.

Race Bus Drivers

In the matter of transportation corporations employing our group, Tulsa is unlike any city in all America in that the present transportation corporation, owned and operated by Chicago interests and said to be a subsidiary of the Greyhound lines and the Great Northern railroad, employs 21 of our Race as engineers (commonly called bus drivers) who man or operate the busses of this corporation in those sections of the city where our Race lives and have their business enterprises.

This set up is in keeping with an agreement or contract entered into between the late Simon Berry, Race bus line owner, who sometime ago, 1931 to be specific, disposed of his privately owned bus line to the Union Transportation company with a proviso that our group should man and operate those busses on the Greenwood and Lansing lines.

The Greenwood line runs from Sixth and Boston, in the heart of downtown Tulsa, through the Race business district along Greenwood avenue and out Greenwood to Pine where it connects with the Lansing lines which accommodate patrons in the big Lansing residential district.

The Lansing lines also operate from Sixth and Boston in downtown Tulsa thence, out through Archer business district to Lansing, then north on Lansing to the junction point with the Greenwood line, thence through the residential district on Peoria, to Young street and from Young street to Madison avenue back to Lansing and downtown Tulsa at Sixth and Boston.

There are also, in addition to the regular bus men, eight garage men.

Wages Increased

Under the new wage and hour scale put into operation by the present corporation which owns the bus transportation in Tulsa, our group employed by the corporation, benefit, along with the white employes, in that it is reported that they receive the same salary as white operators. Previously, our bus drivers received $85 per month as salary.

Under the new set up, they work a maximum of 54 hours per week at 55 cents per hour, which gives each employee a weekly salary of $29.70, or a monthly salary for four weeks work of $118.80 which is an increase of $33.80 over the previous monthly salary received.

Tulsans boast with considerable justification that no city in America gives our Race such consideration and salary in the matter of employment on a proportionate, percentage or population basis.

To talk with some of the Tulsans about their experiences here during the past 25 or more years discloses information which seems more like fiction and romance than

real experiences.

Thomas R. Gentry, for instance, is one of those persons. Mr. Gentry, a highly respected citizen and wealthy property owner, occupies a $7,000 commodious home of 11 rooms at 537 North Detroit avenue.

Gentry is a Kansan by nativity, having first discovered America at Argentine which is now a part of Kansas City, Kans. He was brought to Oklahoma when a youngster, in 1889. To use his own words: "I have lived all over Oklahoma since that time." Further inquiry brought out, that during the intervening years since 1889, Gentry has lived in Guthrie, Chandler, Purcell, Oklahoma City, Okmulgee, and Sapulpa.

He landed in Tulsa in 1903 and has resided here since that time.

In 1903—34 years ago—Tulsa was then a city with a population of 1,500 people. There were only 10 Race families in the city at that time.

The present Greenwood avenue, which is now the center of Race business activity, and known from one end of America to another for its industry, thrift and business comeback, was then a corn field, according to Gentry.

He has seen this secetion of the city grow from a corn field to a busy, bustling business district and a center of Negro activity in this mide-western metropolis. Today, Tulsa's Race population is near 20,000.

Gentry's activities in Tulsa have been as follows: Began his first business enterprise at 106 North Greenwood in 1913 when he set up a cigar store and a one-man shining parlor; in 1914, he increased his business and added a pool table and moved across the street to 105 North Greenwood avenue; after two years at that point, in 1916, he moved to 117 North Greenwood, where he entered the wholesale cigar business and installed 10 pool tables; so flourishing was his business at that time that he ventured into larger field; accordingly, in 1917, he entered the real estate business in which he is still engaged; from 1917 through 1921, the year of the riot, Gentry did a flourishing real estate business and amassed a fortune; with the coming of the disastrous riot of June 1, 1921, Gentry lost $40,000 by destruction of buildings and other property on which he carried insurance but could not collect, due to the failure of insurance companies to pay face value of policies for property destroyed or damaged by fire in the riot.

Only about three or four of our group actually were paid insurance for damage done to their property in the riot and in neither case did the amount paid by the insurance company exceed $1,000. A few were able to collect the premium which they had paid. Gentry was in this number.

Reminiscing about his boyhood days back in Kansas, and the trip to Oklahoma, Gentry observes: "I came to Oklahoma in 1889 from Lawrence, Kans., to Guthrie with my father, my mother having died sometime before. We came to Oklahoma in a covered wagon. The trip from Lawrence to Guthrie required 10 days. My father staked off 160 acres of land near Guthrie which was contested by a man named Johnson, also a Negro. My father's name was William Gentry. The courts settled the contest by dividing the acres equally between my father and Johnson.

"Times got so hard back there, that my father mortgaged and finally lost his 80 acres. He then settled on some school land, 18 miles east of Guthrie, which he rented from the United States government."

Questioned as to the outlook for the Race economically and politically in Oklahoma, Gentry said: "The Negro's future in Oklahoma is dependent upon himself. He has a chance here. Nobody, however, is handing us anything at any time on a silver platter. If we go out and make good and acquire anything, we must hustle for it. And, I mean we must sure enough hustle!"

In the heyday of Gentry's amassing of wealth, he developed six sub-divisions or plats from which he sold lots to his own people. These plats today are some of the finest sections of Tulsa and have homes in some of them which compare favorably with the best homes in some of the largest cities in America. The following named plats were developed by him in his real estate ventures: Curley Hill, Henry, LeClaire, Liberty Second (a previous Liberty One section having been developed), Gentry (named for the developer), and Gentry Second.

Today, Tulsa is unique among American cities of whatever size. It illustrates definite, specific results which have attended efforts of Race citizens who, in the face of disaster, disappointment and disadvantages, have forged ahead in business enterprises and in all those things which go along with good home life, to make Tulsa an enviable place in many respects.

Gentry's wife is the former Lottie E. Nance of Searcy, Ark. They have one child, Mrs. Vernal Mae Gentry-Lawson, who resides with them. "The hardest years of my life, as I recall, were 1889 through 1893. I remember that we ate wild cats and skunks and were glad to get them back in those days," the battle-scarred warrior observed.

Progress of the Negro—1937

National Memorial to the Progress of the Race in America.

Everybody Knows About Nat'l Memoria Except That Memorial's Board Members

WASHINGTON, D. C., April 16.—A survey this week of the National Advisory Board of the National Memorial to the Progress of the Race in America, a $20,000,000 project being fostered by Lightfoot Solomon Micheaux, disclosed that most of the advisory board members had permitted their names to be used as directors of a project concerning which they knew nothing.

The first resignation came from Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune, NYA director and head of the Bethune Cookman college in Florida.

Mrs. Bethune tendered her resignation three weeks ago.

The proposed memorial is thought to be one of the most ambitious ever undertaken. The project is proposed to be erected in Virginia near Jamestown and is to include a university, a hostess house named in honor of Mrs. Bethune and several other buildings.

Miss Nannie H. Burroughs, president of the National Training School for women and girls, whose name has been listed among the advisory board, said this week that she, herself is building a memorial to women and girls at Lincoln Heights, "I wish to make it clear that I do not know anything about it," said Miss Burroughs.

The third woman member of the board, Mrs. Julia West Hamilton, president of the board of directors of Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, was equally uninformed as to the working of the national memorial.

She knew nothing of the plans of the memorial, and said that her name had been placed on the directorate. Mrs. Hamilton did not have time to solicit membership for the memorial, and was never present at the meeting of the board.

John C. Bruce, supervising principal in the public schools, said "he must be a member" since his name is being used on the board but he has not attended a board meeting; he has heard of the plans, but has never heard anything definite about it. He stated the whole proposition was rather vague.

Judge William C. Houston, commissioner of education for the Elks, declared that he had not attended a meeting of the board although he had been asked to allow his name to appear on the stationery and he consented, he said, however, "I don't know anything about it."

J. Finley Wilson, grand exalted ruler of the Elks, was equally as ignorant of the Micheaux Memorial. "I saw all of the other big names on it, so told them they could use mine too," said Mr. Wilson, he stated that he supposed that he was still a member, "if the others are."

Jesse H. Mitchell, president of the Industrial Bank of Washington, said that he was still a member, but that he had been too busy to attend the meetings. He stated that he was not familiar with the plans of the memorial.

Dr. William H. Jernagin, pastor Mt. Carmel Baptist Church and president of the National BYPU, and Young Peoples' Congress, assented to being a board member, saying that he believed a meeting would be held this week.

Dr. John R. Hawkins, financial secretary of the AME church, could not be reached for a statement.

Dr. William J. T. Thompkins, Recorder of Deeds in and for the District of Columbia, said that he was still a member, and that he will "stick by Micheaux."

The memorial seeks to erect a $20,000,000 memorial in Virginia, and is canvassing memberships for $1.00 and up. At first the plans for raising money were not divulged, later a subscription campaign was announced.

The headquarters of the memorial is in a building at 14th and T streets, N.W.

Newport News, Va. Press
September 11, 1937

PLEDGES TO NEGRO MEMORIAL PROJECT HERE PASS $11,000

Campaign to Be Carried on Toward $50,000 Goal; Geddy to Discuss Plans With Rockefeller

Subscriptions totalling $11,821.75 toward the proposed national memorial to the Negro race near Jamestown have been made in the Newport News campaign, Rev. Lightfoot S. Michaux, Negro evangelist who is promoting the campaign, said last night. The campaign opened about two months ago with $50,000 as an objective.

The projected memorial is to be located on the shores of the James river, across a narrow inlet from Jamestown island. About 500 acres of land already has been acquired for the project. Michaux, who has headed the national organization working for consummation of the memorial from its inception several yearas ago, said several million dollars will be required to develop the memorial in its entirety.

Headquarters of the local campaign organization has been moved from a temporary location on Twenty-fifth street near Jefferson avenue to a permanent location at 555 Twenty-fifth street, Michaux said. Unpaid pledges toward the memorial fund are payable at this office. The campaign will be carried on "until the objective has been gained," the elder said.

A campaign organization was formed here with both white and Negro leaders on its advisory board. Dr. W. P. Dickerson, Negro practitioner, is director general; Leroy F. Ridley, Negro, and G. Franklin Lenz are treasurers jointly; Prof. N. B. Clark, Negro, chairman of the advisory board, and Emily Thomas and G. Wesley Rainey Jr., Negroes, chairmen of the program and entertainment committee.

Michaux said similar campaigns are to be prosecuted in other cities of the nation. The advisory committee met last night to discuss plans for formation of a Negro chorus of about 75 voices as a permanent organization of cultural character connected with the memorial, and this will be done in each city where a campaign is carried on, he said.

He added that he discussed the memorial project yesterday with Vernon M. Geddy of Williamsburg, represeoting the restoration interests in that city, and that Geddy was "very much impressed" with the plans and promised to discuss them with John D Rockefeller Jr., financier of the Williamsburg restoration.

Subscriptions of considerable amounts have been made to the memorial fund by leaders among both white and Negro races here. Michaux said the largest recent pledge was $175 made by S. W. Holt and company.

A manifold character is planned in the proposed memorial. As designed, it is to include museums and statuary linked with the progress the Negro race has made in the United States; educational institutions designed to further the cultural advancement of the race; and a hundred five-acre farms to be owned by the memorial but operated by Negro tenants on a co-operative basis both as to operation and marketing.

The site near Jamestown was selected for two major reasons—first, the fact that the first Negroes to enter this country were brought to Jamestown in 1619; and second, the fact that this location will link the memorial with the development of the Colonial National Historical park, of which Jamestown island is a part.